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CLASSIFICATION

21 APR 1954

DATE _____

TO **Chief of Station, Guatemala []**

FROM **LINCOLN**

SUBJECT { GENERAL **Guatemalan Matters**
SPECIFIC **Personal Observations Guatemala City**

1. There is attached for your information a copy of an informal report prepared by Paul B. Langvin following a recent visit to Guatemala City.

2. This is the type of information that is desired at least weekly from Guatemala. We need your impressions of the local scene. Often these matters may appear obvious to you, but we depend upon you for such reports, which serve as a background for all intelligence and FM information. Such subjects as unusual movements of troops, unexplained activities among government officials, shifts in propaganda efforts, and street rumors are of importance. These reports need not be long, and an informal style is perfectly acceptable.

JEROME C. DUNBAR

OSV/1k

15 April 1954

Distributions

Guatemala (2) w/1 att.

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CLASSIFICATION

11 29 March
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Informant Report by Paul Langevin of the Trip Made to the Factory.

(covering the period from Tuesday, 23 March until Saturday, 27 March)

The initial paragraphs of this report will concern the observations of a PM nature, as noticed by someone who was visiting the country for the first time.

1. First of all, a new and very large military base has been established almost directly across the very large ravine from the fortress Matamoros. This base is still being erected and only the buildings which appear to be barracks have been completely terminated. Other larger buildings which seem to be gymnasiums, or auditoriums of some kind, have not been terminated. It has been reported that the large number of troops which are now stationed in the establishment near the airport will soon move to this new base. There ~~are~~^{are}, however, only two roads connecting this base with the city proper, both of which go down through the ravine, and they would be rather difficult to traverse very rapidly. From appearances, especially from the air, it looks as if, with normal work procedure, this military base will not be finished for some six months, although as I have said, it could be used any time because of the barracks buildings which have been finished. There is one large and very new highway which is being constructed from over the mountains and past this base, but it stops at the edge of this large ravine, and no work has as yet been begun on the large bridge which obviously must connect this road with the city itself. This road is obviously going to be a principal artery, but will be ineffective until the bridge is constructed.

2. The largest military concentrations of different types to be found in the city are around the perimeter and close to the Campo de Martes, the large parade ground which has a reviewing stand at one end, (a ravine drops abruptly behind that reviewing stand) and ~~which~~ which has a long series of low buildings at the other end. This large ~~parade~~ parade area is very flat, and although there are roads which cross it, they are flush with the ground so that the area is one large flat surface. On one side of the Campo de Martes can be found the radio towers which are said to be those of one of the large stations, but which certainly have a military appearance. Next to this radio transmitter sight is the building of the Cavalry, but it seemed that most of the horses were being used for pleasure and are not used in a military sense except in parades. Also, on the other side of the field, is to be found the military school and the Cuartel General, both of which are surrounded by high walls and which are very well guarded. Also, in this immediate area, can be found a block of housing where officers and their families live. Incidentally, it is said that these officers must pay a rather high rent for these houses--much, much higher, for instance, than in neighboring countries. Within two blocks of this immediate area can also be found the residence and office of the Chief of Staff of the country's army. There are three wide avenues from which one can go from the Campo de Martes into the center of the city. One of these crosses over a land-bridge, which is very firm, so the three could be used at all times. I visited the Campo de Martes for three successive days and on all three days saw there three tanks. Two of these tanks were in operation. They seemed to be used for training purposes, as there were many soldiers around them. There was also a tractor there, presumably to pull the tanks in case they broke down. There was also one armored car. These tanks did not mount machine guns; they did, however, have a thirty-seven millimeter. It is presumed that these vehicles must be kept in the Cuartel General which is just on the edge of the field.

3. Some distance from the field and up the road to Salvador, just at the base of the hills there are three very tall and very new radio towers, the first and third of which are equipped with saucer-like apparatus, which seemed to be some sort of directional-beaming equipment.

4. In the residential area which lies between the Campo de Martes, roughly, and the air field I noticed on three successive days troop maneuvers. These usually consisted in platoons of approximately twenty-five men with one officer marching in single file to this area. My guide during this trip was ESPERANCE, who lives in this immediate area, and he said this is something entirely new, ~~that has only been taking place in the last few weeks.~~ that has only been taking place in the last few weeks. In this area, very close to the Plaza Reforma, there are many new small bungalows going up, which also are going to be used to house the families of the officers.

5. At the air port itself, one was able to note a very large number of small private airplanes--about twenty-five on one side of the field, and another twenty-five or thirty directly opposite. These private planes seem to be in very good shape, as I noticed that many

of them were taken up without any sort of a check at all, and they seemed to be maintained in a very good operational way. Presumably this would be a crucial point in the case of any sort of action, due to the fact that many of the planes are ready to take off at any time. An incidental note here, Esperance, who is a pilot, has been approached by individuals who queried on the possibility of his flying them out of the country in case of action. Around the perimeter of the airfield proper, the largest number of men is the group that is found in the airforce barracks at the field. There are a series of pillboxes, rather old and not being used, along this stretch of road, and there is a sentry at approximately every two hundred yards. Altogether in this area there seemed to be some ten men who are on duty. Incidentally, it is reported that in 1944 these barracks were immobilized by students who stood in the woods across the road from the barracks and put rifle shots through the windows of the barracks and immobilized all the occupants for some hours. There are several groups of buildings with radio antennae around the field, one of which belongs to the Air Mission, another to the Mapping Service, and others which belong to the various commercial airlines and to the government. On the opposite side of the field, at the main entrance, there is a guard house with six men on duty, and apparently another set in a small barracks in this guard house waiting to go on duty. Apparently there are twelve men there all the time. There is also a sentry box at the two corners of the field which are nearest the town, just along the old aqueduct. There is one sentry posted at each of these sentry houses. Presumably this situation is duplicated at the other end of the field, although there is a large ravine there--so possibly not. I also saw two tanks on the road to Antigua. These tanks had four or five men on top and were followed by a jeep which contained an officer and seven men. All of these men carried rifles, but there were no machine-guns, grenades, or other such weapons visible, except for the thirty-seven millimeter gun in the tanks themselves.

6. One of the few roads which comes into the town, the highway from Salvador, was closed at the time of my visit, due to a landslide which occurred, presumably because of a small rain. In order to reach the highway, then, it was necessary to take the old Salvador road and go around the large hill and join the highway on the other side.

7. The largest concentration of on-duty sentries in the city seemed to be in the guard room of the National Palace. Perhaps it would be better to say, just behind the National Palace, at the side of the President's home. There were some thirty men here when I passed at eight-thirty in the evening. They seemed to be alert, and there were at least three machine-guns present. The headquarters of the Federal Police, although physically forming a very effective sort of fortress and still bearing the scars in the way of bullet markings of previous revolts, is not unusually heavily guarded. There are a large number of police at the entrance to the Federal Penitentiary, but it is difficult to observe the difference between the police and what are obviously trustees. It is rumored in the city that the police force and the army are in dire need of ammunition of all types, and many people there say that they hope that the recent trip to Switzerland of one of their fellows will mean that this ammunition shortage will soon be taken care of.

8. In considering the possible movement of any large body of men in action across the city, the old water aqueduct near the airport should be taken into account, as it forms a very definite wall.

9. One can find a mural-type poster which is put out by the Government. The top three-quarters of this poster consist of photographs of happy workers, etc. and the bottom quarter, across the length of the poster, in very large letters, puts across the following idea, "At this moment the 'vendepatrias'...with our enemies, with the assistance of the imperialistic government scheme...to overthrow us. They will even go so far as to make a futile attempt against us with horrible explosives." It has been said that type of poster at least with this particular sentiment, has only appeared recently. Another very small poster which is obvious, especially in the center of the town, is the one about ten inches high and eight inches wide which employs a hammer and sickle to create a skull and crossbones motif, printed entirely in black, and addressed especially to the country's workers. About sixty-five percent of these were defaced. There are, however, many posters, obviously a parody of this one, also in color, in which the face of Uncle Sam has been replaced with the face of Malenkov. The largest number of these posters is to be found in the crowded area roughly between the National Palace, the Cemetery and the brewery. Standing near newsbo

I was able to observe that the opposition and independent Press outsells the government papers anywhere from eight to ten, to one. It seemed to me that a very large number were sold, especially of Impacto and El Espectador. During the time of my visit a cyclist exhibition was being held in the main plaza of the town, directly in front of the National Congress. There was always a crowd present watching to see a young Colombian go around the plaza for three days without stopping. Consequently I was able to talk to many people in different strata of life and received varied impressions. One: now things were better than they were, the worker can protest bad treatment, long hours and insufficient pay. At the other extreme ~~some~~ gentlemen who said exactly the opposite, and said that they would be willing to jump in the middle of anything that started. However, the over-all impression taken from about thirty one-minute interviews was that no one, either at one extreme or the other, or in the middle, expected that anything would happen. Not once did I meet anyone who definitely thought that any thought of physical revolt against the present regime was forthcoming. All seemed to be concerned about the fact that so much was being written about their country in the international press. As a result of these interviews, this reporter feels that the national character, in contrast to many Latin characters, is one of placidity. For example, during the student manifestations many large and very loud fire-crackers were shot in the streets, but no one bothered with them at all ~~and no one~~ ~~looked out of apartment windows~~ and no one looked out of apartment windows. It seems that this placidity of the citizens would even extend to a time of crisis, and thus it should be considered that the number-one objective at any such time would be creating the impression that one side or the other had actually taken over, or had the situation well in hand. At this time presumably, people might go out into the streets, join groups, but according to everything I was able to deduct here, they are not the sort of people who will, on their own, run out to take part in proceedings; rather, they would be more inclined to sit tight and not make any move until they thought they were going to make a move on the winning side.

[Paul D. Langevin]